



Age Is Wonderful If You're Wine Or Cheese.

At Duke University, a longitudinal study was accomplished following Medicare beneficiaries age 65 and beyond for ten years. The study began with 20,325 patients, and at ten years 10,476 were available for study. The parameters of age-related macular degeneration, primary open angle glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy showed that more than half the patients had come down with at least one of these eye disorders. The so-called golden years are really more like crumbling calcium, as the wheels start to wobble, the joints break down, the machine is leaking oil, and the aging bod sags in many places. In the words of Charles DeGaulle at age 80, "Old age is a shipwreck."

Please Add The Stars And Bars On The Door.

Jim Crow lives on in Pennsylvania no less. A pregnant woman was admitted for care at Abingdon Memorial Hospital, and her husband requested that no African-American employees be allowed to enter the room. A staff person (not identified) placed a sign outside the patient's room indicating that no black employees should enter, apparently acquiescing to the prejudicial request. That is a direct violation of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, and put the hospital in an unflattering national spotlight. Obviously, medical care is provided by skilled staff without regard to race, color, gender, national origin, creed, or religion of patient or employee. A patient can select his/her primary care physician based upon gender or whatever, but that right does not extend to the hospital personnel. While bigotry may occasionally exist in our island home, our multi-colored, multi-racial, variegated people would laugh at this absurd request. Once more, lucky you live Hawaii!

Gender Surgery Is Out For Me, But Cross Dressing Might Work.

Writing for the *Risk Communication Institute*, John Paling quoted figures from the *Physician Insurance Association of America* (PIAA) and found that women doctors are sued much less often than their male counterparts. Whereas females are 20% of the physician population in America, they make up just 6% of malpractice defendants. Why? Mr. Paling believes that the difference relates to communication. He surmises that women physicians tend to suggest rather than direct, spend more time with patients, and encourage open discussion. The result is a better communicative relationship and more trust.

"Everybody Wants To Get Into The Act." Jimmy Durante

The Attorney General of the United States (you remember him!) believes that the government can regulate medical care, including whether a physician can recommend medical marijuana. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against the AG, that his judgement is inconsistent with the First Amendment, and that professional speech should be protected. Moreover, the Court ruled that the government could not investigate a physician or revoke his DEA registration for such a recommendation. Now the US Solicitor General has petitioned the Supreme Court to review whether a physician's advice to use medical marijuana is equivalent to a "prescription." Just go away, will you please.

Cost Of Living Increase? Congress, Yes! Medicare, No!

The going is tough in medicine these days with threatened cuts in reimbursement by Medicare and rising malpractice premiums. It means doctors must work harder and tighten their belts. Not so, however, in Washington D.C. where the Senate recently voted 60 to 34 to raise their annual salaries by \$3,400, following the previous action by the House. Of course, it is not called a raise! Those smiling people have built in an annual automatic "cost of living increase" which must be voted down or otherwise will be added. (Strange that the same formula does not apply to Medicare.) They have failed to vote it down now for five consecutive years and increased their take home by \$21,000 in that period. How did Hawaii's frolicking foursome vote? Dan, Dan, Neil and Ed went 4 to 0, in favor of their wallets!

No Brute Ever Does A Cruel Thing. That Is The Province Of Moralists.

The recent action of the President and Congress by outlawing "partial-birth abortion" is both an ethical insult to doctor and patient, and an invasion of medical practice. No physician of any standing, nor any woman with a

modicum of sense would consider late trimester abortion for reasons of convenience. But there are times when a mother's health could be in jeopardy, or the fetus might have a serious birth defect, and decisions must be made by the parties directly involved, not by moralistic politicians in some far off domain of pretentious ethos. Please spare us the heavy hand of those who are certain of what is "right."

He's So Cautious He Looks Both Ways Before Crossing A One Way Street.

Anyone who doubts that American doctors practice "defensive" medicine in their worries over medical liability, can refer to a study published in the *Journal of the AMA*. The data were based on females 50 years and older evaluated over a three year period 1996 through 1999 in the U.S. and the United Kingdom, undergoing their first mammograms. In the U.S., 14.4% were recalled for additional follow up tests, usually biopsies, while the figure in Britain was 7.6%. The difference would be worthwhile if it indicated a higher detection rate, but the diagnostic rate was very nearly 6 cases per 1,000 mammograms on both sides of the Atlantic. Are the British radiologists more skilled at cancer detection, or are American docs more concerned about cases that are uncertain? The question seems to answer itself.

People Are Too Durable. That's Their Main Trouble.

On every flight of five hours or more, passengers routinely notice fatigue, sore throats, eye and nasal irritation, generalized dryness and torpor. In fact, the air in the cabin is about as moist as the Mojave desert with humidity measured at 10%. This is not news to the airlines, but creating humidifiers would cost between \$60,000 and \$300,000 per aircraft. Some airlines already use them in the cockpit and crew rest areas to keep the crew fresh, alert and comfortable, but no carrier has yet decided to offer it as a passenger amenity. Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS) has installed a humidifying system in a Boeing 767 for test purposes. SAS claims the moisture level at 20 to 25% has seemed to decrease gripes of dry contact lenses, dry noses and throats, and complaints from asthmatics. Systems have been installed on business jets such as Lears, Gulfstreams, Challengers and Boeings. "The writing is on the wall," according to Thierry Voirirot, CEO of Le Bozec Filtration & Systems. Meanwhile, keep-a-movin dan and carry a jug of cool, clear water.

Out With The Old: In With The Bold.

Jeb Bush, Governor of the state of Florida, doesn't always meddle in personal decisions like the foolish Schiarrara manipulation. This time he signed into law a requirement that all written prescriptions must be printed or typed. As we all must admit, doctors are notorious for poor handwriting, and mistakes in interpretation and transcription are not uncommon. The new law provides that the drug quantity must be noted in numerical and text language, and the month must be spelled out also. Without doubt this law makes good sense, and it is likely that other states will soon follow Florida's example.

But Judge, Duty Called, And I Answered!

In Springfield, Missouri, Officer Michael Murphy was directed to destroy 70 bottles of beer which had been taken as evidence by the underage-drinking task force. Murphy was fired when it was determined that he "destroyed" the evidence by drinking it. His attorney has threatened a lawsuit to get the officer reinstated. "He didn't steal. He didn't falsify any report. Turning beer into urine is disposal."

ADDENDA

- ❖ The giant squid has an eye the size of a pie plate, the largest in the animal kingdom.
- ❖ Number of golf balls lost in the U.S. last year, 2.56 billion! Number of balls found and recycled, 1.9 billion. Number new golf balls purchased, 600 million.
- ❖ A Republican is a business man who will steal from you directly. A Democrat will get the IRS to do it for him. (P.J. O'Rourke.) A cynic is the author of this column.

Aloha and keep the faith —rts■